

Rights for Native people

AND

Energy for ALL

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POLAR PAM

Interprovincial Pipelines Ltd (IPL) applied March 24 1980 to build a 12" pipeline from Norman Wells, NWT, 500 miles to Zama in Northern Alberta.

At the same time Esso Resources Canada Ltd applied to expand production of the Norman Wells oilfield.

Imperial Oil owns Esso and is the main shareholder in IPL (32.8%)

The Government of the NWT, the Dene of the Mackenzie Valley and the Metis Association of NWT are united in opposing the construction of the pipeline at this time.

Justice Berger is being ignored

In 1977, Justice Thomas Berger recommended a ten year moratorium on all major development in the Mackenzie Valley until native land claims are settled and implemented. He made it clear that the development of such a project before the Dene have some control over their lives would have a devastating impact on them. This proposed pipeline is in direct violation of Justice Berger's recommendation.

"The Dene might lose more than they would gain by a pipeline development in the immediate future and that a pipeline project could impose on the Dene population of the Mackenzie Valley unfavourable impacts for which it may not be possible to compensate". (National Energy Board - in Northern Pipeline Decision, 1977, p200, Vol.3)

Is it worth it?

The pipeline is expected to carry 25,000 barrels of oil per day, which is equivalent of only one half of one percent of Canada's energy needs and provides for only 29 permanent jobs. The total cost of the pipeline, including the expanded production facilities at Norman Wells is \$800 million.

Northerners say that under present arrangements, they will benefit very little from the pipeline, but will bear heavy social, economic and environmental costs.

SOCIAL

The fact that this pipeline is much smaller than the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline proposed a few years ago does not lessen the environmental and social costs.

The pipeline will act as a catalyst for an energy corridor of highways, pipelines, hydro projects and for further exploration.

ECONOMIC

Besides a just native rights settlement, the NWT wants a resource revenue sharing agreement, a development plan, and a guaranteed fuel supply, before the pipeline goes ahead.

At the present time no-one in the NWT receives any royalties whatsoever.

"The project (if carried out before a claim settlement) will serve to further lock the Dene into a state of economic dependency and underdevelopment... the results may indeed be that of cultural genocide...are we prepared to risk sacrificing the Dene people and their culture for the sake of adding one percent more oil to our national supply?" (Bishop Remi de Roo to National Energy Board 1980)

ENVIRONMENTAL

A number of environmental problems remain unsolved by the pipeline company. There is serious risk, for example, of oil spills in rivers, and damage to the permafrost environment.

(Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Panel - Jan 22, 1981)

Who owns the land anyway?

The Federal government is expected to resume negotiations for unsettled aboriginal rights with the Dene nation this year. Since Dene control over their land is a key question to be settled, chances for a fair negotiation process are seriously undermined if the government allows the pipeline to proceed at this time.

The Dene have never surrendered their land. They maintain, and were supported by Justice William Morrow in 1979, that treaties 8 and 11 were friendship treaties only. The Government's written version is considered fraudulent.

"How could we sell our land for \$5 when it is not ours to sell? It belongs to our children and their children."
Dene Chief.

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Every time the white people come to the North or come to our land and start tearing up the land, I feel as if they are cutting our own flesh, because that is the way we feel about our land. It is our flesh. (Georgina Tobac 1975)

There are alternatives

Conservation of conventional resources and the development of renewable substitutes is the only way that we can achieve energy self-sufficiency.. If the \$800 million that Imperial Oils plans to spend on this project were invested in conservation (eg. home insulation) we would save more oil per day than Imperial could produce. It would also result in two or three times more permanent jobs than the pipeline.

Canada's National Energy Program 1980 objectives are : demand reduction, greater emphasis on renewable energy, substitution of more plentiful fuels (eg. gas) to reduce oil use, and greater attention to socio-economic impact of energy development.

"The need for frontier resources given the other options that Canadians can proceed with, is not so great that it must override our social goals and obligations."

(National Energy Program 1980 in reference to northern Native peoples).

The pipeline at this time would be one more step towards the petroleum companies energy policy - (eg. large non-renewable projects controlled by them.) It is one more step away from a more socially responsible energy policy.

Constitution

The Norman Wells pipeline situation is an example of one violation of Native rights which occurs when these rights are not adequately safeguarded in the Constitution.

Aboriginal and treaty rights of all Native people of Canada must be entrenched in the new Constitution.

Native people are the only group of citizens who are opposing the constitution. The reason for this is they are the only group having rights that Parliament cannot take away and they are fighting for these rights. Instead of seeing them as a divisive element we should see their struggle as an example which should lead us to question what rights we have in the Constitution and how we should proceed to procure them.

What you can do

A number of events are being held across Canada to press demands to delay this pipeline. Church, Native, labor, political, environment, and farm organizations have joined together to form a Coalition for Responsible Northern Development and are in agreement with northerners in opposing construction of the pipeline at this time.

We urge you and your organization to send letters and telegrams to Hon. John Munro, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario.

In your letter, be sure to include a question which will require the Minister's response. To increase ten-fold the effectiveness of your letter, answer his response with a second letter.

Send copies of your letters, telegrams to: R. Hon. Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister and to Hon. John Roberts, Minister of the Environment.

Our position is not based on ignorance as many people try to say it is. It's based on facts and on experience with large development projects. For example right in Yellowknife there are two gold mines, Giant Mines and Con Mines. They're producing gold all the time and the wastes from their production are piled up. These wastes contain arsenic which leaks out and drains into the bay. For over three years now we have been told by Health and Welfare not to drink or bath in the water from the bay because of the arsenic. In addition to this the wastes from the smelter pollutes the ground, the water, the snow, the trees, the berries and every thing else over a wide area. Even though it is widely acknowledged that the pollution from the mines is a threat to our environment and our health the mining continues because it makes a few people rich.

It will be no different with the pipeline and oilfield expansion. While the main problems won't be arsenic the effects will just as bad or worse. Ripping up the land, tearing up the river bottoms and the ever present threat of oil spills plus the use of chemicals, large equipment and unproven technology such as artificial islands will put things in motion which cannot be reversed and has the potential of doing an awful lot of damage to our environment. What members of the National Energy Board must recognize is that our land to us, is like our blood. It contains the things we need to keep us alive and healthy. We don't want to harm our land or our bodies ourselves and we don't want anyone else harming our land or our bodies either... We've always demonstrated that we are willing to share the land with those who are willing to protect it and use it wisely. (North Slave Region to NEB 1980)

"If the native peoples interests and political rights can be dismissed with so little concern, what of the political and economic interests of southern Canadians?" (Right Rev. Lois Wilson, Moderator of the United Church to NEB hearings 1980)

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